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AD/R

17 May 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE DIRECTOR

FROM: Acting Assistant Director, Intelligence Coordination  
SUBJECT: Survey of Interdepartmental Committees

1. In making a survey of Interdepartmental Committees in which CIA has an interest we have attempted to isolate the questions in which you are primarily interested. These may be:

a. Question: Do we know what committees there are?

Answer: Yes. Attached hereto are three lists:

(1) A list of interdepartmental committees in which CIA has a primary concern, either from the intelligence or the operations standpoint, and which have been established by the NSC, IAC, or CIA.

(2) A list of committees in which CIA participates but does not have the primary interest and which were established by agencies other than the IAC or CIA.

(3) A list of those committees which, though frequently referred to, have been found upon investigation to have been terminated or are in the process of termination.

b. Question: Are policy commitments being made in these interdepartmental committees and if so do the members have in each case authority to make the commitment?

Answer: It is not believed, from our survey, that CIA members of committees are making commitments for the Agency without proper authority. There are frequently occasions in which a CIA member undertakes to perform a task in the mutual interest of the Committee members which is at the same time in line with the functional responsibility of this Agency (and more specifically of his office). Many of these occur at the working level and, in fact, should be carried out on the responsibility of the Assistant Director concerned without reference to higher authority.

c. Question: Do other departments or agencies control CIA functions and decisions through the Committee device?

Answer: This is not believed to be the case. Other departments cannot control the kind of work CIA does if our people understand the Agency's functional responsibilities. It is believed

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that the officers concerned with interdepartmental committees are relatively clear on this matter and appreciate the need for top-level decision in this area. Furthermore the committees cannot assign workloads even in pursuance of proper responsibilities without the acquiescence of the assignees.

d. Question: Are the interdepartmental committees trying jointly to discharge responsibilities which clearly belong within a single agency?

Answer: In general this is not true, although the establishment of a committee is sometimes sought by an administrator simply to share his problem. The justification for a committee is rather that it can provide a systematic method of consultation and a means of dealing with problems where effective action must be coordinated in timing and emphasis. Clearly the existence of a committee cannot relieve the responsible official of any of his obligations. In general these principles are understood.

e. Question: Does adequate coordination require these committees?

Answer: Yes, in general. In most instances the formal committee is the most effective way of carrying out the required coordination. There are some cases in which coordination might be as effectively achieved through other means. Here the continuance of a committee rests upon a variety of factors. In those instances where it is clear that committees are the less effective means of coordination, this Office, in conjunction with the other Assistant Directors, is seeking their elimination. It is noteworthy that committees which are embedded in statute or directive are particularly hard to get rid of once they have outlived their usefulness.

f. Question: Are the interdepartmental committees in fact performing effectively and how can they be improved?

Answer: It is doubtful that any committee functions as effectively and as efficiently as we would like. A summary statement that we are doing well or badly is not very helpful. What is required is an examination and thereafter continuing alertness regarding the effectiveness of each committee and what steps can be taken for improvement. Initially each Assistant Director has the responsibility for being concerned and taking proper measures where necessary to see that committees under his own responsibility are effective. In addition it is my task to assist the Assistant Directors and yourself in seeking improvement. Suggestions for improvement may take different forms. Thus, for example, in the

case of the Watch Committee O/IC in consultation with O/CI has submitted recommendations to you on what needs to be done and how we should proceed. In other cases suggestions have been made in the course of working with the Agency's committee chairmen or our representatives.

2. It is entirely to be expected that an agency such as CIA which has a sizeable coordinating role should use the formal committee as a technique or method in achieving coordination. Each administrator must realize, however, that he remains responsible for matters in his area whether there is a committee involved or not. The Director's problem, then, with respect to committees, becomes indistinguishable from the general problem of supervising the work of the major units of the Agency.

JAMES Q. REBER